

NSC BRIEFING

11 February 1959

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LATIN AMERICA

I. Cuban situation still basically unstable.

A. Govt is ineffectual.

1. Fidel Castro, nominally chief of armed forces, has neither assumed nor delegated his power.
2. Provisional President Urrutia is weak.
3. Some capable cabinet members, increasingly exasperated, may yet resign, which would seriously weaken public confidence.
4. Castro's public statements reveal strong antagonism to US.

B. Govt facing mounting problems demanding decisive action.

1. Spreading labor unrest will, if nontinued, threaten vital sugar harvest now under way. Govt position is that management should in all cases give in to labor demands.
2. Unemployment reaching serious proportions.
3. Communists now operating freely.
4. University in chaos with students purging faculty.
5. Other political groups waiting opportunity to gain upper hand over Castro's now dominant 26 of July Movement.

II. Castro, riding popular anti-dictator wave, becoming involved in plots against other govts.

A. Thinks of himself as the new Latin American liberator.

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1. He exploits latent anti-US feeling by charging US supports dictators.
 2. He and Venezuelan leaders evidently agree that every aid short of armed intervention should be given to anti-dictator revolutionaries.
 3. In recent public speeches in Caracas, Castro included Puerto Rico among countries to be "liberated."
- B. Extremely weak regime in Haiti may be first target.
1. Haitian opposition leader Dejoie now in Cuba broadcasting to Haiti that "liberation is near."
- C. Dominican Republic is Castro's primary target.
1. The 28 year dictatorship is very strong military position, but Trujillo is nervous.
 2. Anti-Trujillo exiles including some Commies now organizing in Cuba, Venezuela, and US.
- D. Somoza regime in Nicaragua also a target.
- E. Exiled opponents of Stroessner regime in Paraguay reportedly offered arms and a few officers by Castro emissaries.

III. Honduran govt of President Villada is ~~threatened~~ ^{threatened}.

- A. Clandestine rebel radio in Nicaragua or near border has exacerbated longstanding frictions between ruling Liberal party and military on one hand and between opposition parties and President Villeda on other hand.

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1. US Ambassadors have some hope of causing Nicaragua to deport Honduran rebels ^{under} ~~for~~ an agreement whereby each president would promise to prevent plotting in his country against the govt of the other.

IV. In Panama, stability of moderate de la Guardia administration threatened as political maneuvering for 1960 election gets under way.

- A. Opposition, though divided, is potentially dangerous.
- B. National Guard, ^{the President's} ~~de la Guardia's~~ only real source of strength, is weakened by internal divisions.
- C. Increasing criticism of US on Canal and territorial water limits issues by all political factions who are exploiting popular appeal of nationalistic stand on political issues.

V. In Mexico, leftist labor and student groups evidently planning demonstrations during President Eisenhower's 19-21 February visit.

- A. Mexican police aware of plans and are determined and believed capable of containing any agitation.

VI. Venezuelan president-elect Betancourt to be inaugurated tomorrow. There are increasing number of reports ~~that~~ that opposition planning disorders.

- A. Betancourt has limited political support in ^{Caracas} ~~important~~ ~~Political~~ District, the scene of periodic violence during past year.
- B. Some foreign delegations, including US, may be targets of demonstrations despite extensive military precautions.
- C. Widespread disorders could provoke military into attempted takeover.

VII. Argentine President Frondizi faces a period of strong ~~political~~ ~~economic~~ protests, directed mainly against US-backed austerity

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A. Frondizi is determined to push economic program.

1. Aided by state of seige declared 11 November in crack-down on Communist and Peronista agitation.